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THANKSGIVING SERMON,

OF THE

REV. GEO. W. PEPPER, Chaplain U. S. A.,

Delivered before the Governor and members of the Legislature, in the Capitol, Raleigh, N. C., November 26th, 1868.

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We publish this morning, at the request of a large number of friends, the eloquent Thanksgiving Sermon of Rev. George W. Pepper. Extended commendation of this sermon is unnecessary. We invite our readers to peruse it carefully. It would have been published earlier, but official duties prevented the gentleman from preparing even so brief a sketch.

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His Courts with praise."—*Psalm 100th.*

Wondrously beautiful are the ancient Psalms of David. These peerless compositions in splendor of diction and adaptedness to every human event, are not surpassed by any portion of the Sacred Book. They furnish affliction with words of comfort, despondency with expressions of hope, and gladness with strains of triumph. We love these grand outbursts of a kingly heart, as they portray the smitten soul of the penitent, the bitter tears of the returning prodigal, and the exulting gratitude of the emancipated soul.

We fail to realize the beauty and grandeur of the Psalms, unless we remember that they were written for the Temple service, and sung by well-trained choristers. Praise was the chief employment of the Jewish church. The voice of rejoicing was heard daily in the tabernacles. In Heaven the angels and the sacramental host are perpetually praising God. The world, ere it groaned beneath the curse, was one grand temple of praise. The spangled heavens declared his glory. The stars in their everlarsting march sung praises in the grandest music to Him who sits upon the Throne. The mountains, the types of eternal power, proclaimed His glorious majesty.

The Jews were celebrated for their triumphal odes. From the day when they left Egypt to their decline and fall, the Jewish people presented the sublime spectacle of a nation of thanksgivers. Behold that vast jubilant host, wending its way through the classic lands of Judea, to stand before God in the attitude of grateful worshippers! Some of them from the purple vine fields; some from invaded borders; some from desolated homes; some from resounding victories; old prophets, like Moses, whose faces were benedictions; stout warriors, radiant with victory; old mothers in Israel, like Deborah; young men and maidens, with the summer of life dawning on their brows; little children, whose eyes kindled with beauty as they looked upon the grand and beautiful image of their native land. They pitched their ever-green booths on the sacred hills of Judea, and held high festival in commemoration of the distinguished goodness of their Deliverer.

Thanksgiving day is five generations old. How grand that one of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock! There standing on the ice bound coast this immortal band offered up their first thanksgiving in the New World.

Aye, amid the storm they sang,
The stars heard and the sea,
While the sounding anthem of the dim woods rung
With the anthems of the free.

Can we ever forget New England? It is to the thankful piety of her Puritans that we owe this hallowed day. Wherever her children are scattered over the earth's surface, to-day they will travel back to in loving memory to the old homestead. This Thanksgiving day will return to them brighter and fresher than ever. The moss on the ancient trees will brighten with November light, and the tufts of grass will wear a sunnier green.

In dear New England, since the fathers slept,
The sweetest holiday, of all the year.

Busy hands and joyous hearts all over the land are now engaged in the grand service of praise. Gray-headed men and venerable matrons will repeat to the children and grandchildren that girdle them with beauty, the story of their early days. In sympathy

with this good old custom we, too, have assembled in this historic Commons Hall to tune our American harps to the strains of the Hebrew bard. In looking over this brilliant assemblage, I see some on whose heads winter has left its snows; some in the buoyancy of youth; some clad in mourning. That mind must be dark, and that heart adamant, which, in reviewing the past year, cannot behold the many marks of Divine goodness to the Nation, to the family, to the Church, and to the individual. We are here to look upon the the bright lining on the clouds, to string our mercies upon a silver thread of praise. When one of the old guards of Napoleon, who had served the Emperor in days of triumph, lay dangerously wounded by a musket ball, while the surgeon was probing above the soldier's heart to find the bullet, the brave hero's reply was, "A little deeper, and you will find the Emperor." So in the soul of every Christian, the sentiment of gratitude has a conspicuous place.

Shall I not call upon this assembly to guide me to-day up into the mountain of Thanksgiving and offer their praise God for his favors and mercies. Both hands are full of blessings. The grumblers and evil prophets predicted that this year we were to have a financial crash, the nation's most sacred debt was to be repudiated. Grant's election has settled that question forever. This year we were to have the Cholera. Last year this Angel of death swept by the Atlantic seaboard and thousands perished as its shadow fell. There has been perfect health in all our borders. The winter was to crush out our harvests; but in early July, God gave us gentle rains and sunbeams, the fruits ripened and a glorious harvest waved and glittered like a a golden banner. Memorable will indeed this day of Thanksgiving be to the dwellers of the South, Come forward then children of the beneficent Father. The Captol flings open its portals, let us sing the praises of the Lord and His Majestic glory.

We should thank God for the extent and varietyof the national domain. We have the no blest heritage and the fairest lands on earth. We have a country where the grand and the graceful, the awful and the lovely mingle together. Behold its splendid lakes, its fertile plains, its grand mountains, its lovely valleys, its sweeping prairies, its entrancing landscapes, and its sky soft and blue as that which bends over the faded splendors of Italy. That acute observer and great friend of America, De Tocqueville in his work on our country says: "That the United States is the most magnificent dwelling place prepared by God for man's abode. In fashioning this great home for oppressed races the Creator gave us not a barrack, but a palace, not a desert but an Alhambra. When Horace Greeley made his first visit to England, he wrote back to Americans to be sure if they contemplated a trip to Europe, to take a long earnest gaze at the sun, for the thing called sun in England, only shone occasionally and bore little resemblance to its American namesake. Oh! that the crowned princes and kings of Europe would come across the ocean, and behold the greatness of the American Republic. With forty millions of people with a territory greater than all Europe, with a climate unsurpassed, with a soil fruitful as God's love, with immense valleys, the fruits and fleeces of which bid fair to rival the golden sands of our streams, as well as the treasuries of our enchanted rocks.

Great God, we thank thee for this Home
This bounteous birthland of the free
Where wanderers from afar may come
And breathe the air of liberty.
Still may her flowers untrampled spring,
Her harvests wave, her cities rise—
And yet till Time shall fold his wing
Remain Earth's loveliest paradise.

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A nation with such peerless gifts can afford to exercise a broad and generous spirit of magnanimity to the brave but mistaken soldiers of the South, who, for four tempestuous years, upheld their banner with a gallantry, worthy of a purer cause. The reckless defiance of suffering and death exhibited by the soldiers of Lee and Johnston, in the blaze of battle, entitles them to generous consideration and magnanimous treatment. The spirit of proscription is the spirit of perdition! The spirit of charity is the spirit of Heaven. Let the great Republican party and its chief, General Grant, place another pillar and crown of gold in the redeemed nation, by proclaiming a general amnesty to all political offenders.

We should be thankful for our *system of Government*, combining as it does the greatest security with the largest liberty. The priceless blessings of our government may be understood and appreciated by a collation of the various forms of civil polity which existed in the world. The first was monocratic, corresponding to an absolute monarchy of the present day. The second form was theocratic, the rulers of which were called Hierarchs. The third was aristocratic, the few noble governing the many. The fourth and best of all was democratic. Theocracies and aristocracies are founded on the superiority of races. Monarchies have been tried and have failed. Hierarchies have been tried and have failed. Arristocracies have been tried, and they also have failed. Fired by a Heaven-enkindled zeal in behalf of man, our revolutionary fathers, composed of exiles from all lands, flung the banners of Democracy to the breeze, appealing to High Heaven for the vindication and success of their cause. God bent from the splendors of His Throne and blessed the sword of Washington. The crippled colony emerged from obscurity, becoming, as it is now, the greatest Republican Empire in the world, knowing no boundaries save the two great oceans. The hopes of tyrants were defeated. Then the songs of our venerated fathers burst forth like the voice of many waters and the noise of mighty thunderings. Thank God we have a free press, a free gospel, and a free land. America is to teach

the nations the true theory of government. Hail to the day which shall see them rising in their majesty flinging their naked breasts against the kings.

From rock bound Maine to the golden shores of the Pacific enfranchised millions swell the full chorus of liberty. Oh! for the kingly heart of the royal bard that God might be adequately praised for his wonderful mercies. All Europe is catching inspiration from our success. Freedom is everywhere extending her dominion. Spain looks up to the immortal Father. We hail her deliverance from the last Bourbon. Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella has disappeared—the accursed inquisition that devoured the fair Andalusia, turning the loveliest spot in Europe into a pandemonium, is destroyed. Spain, the mother of Hebrew poets, has signalized her progress among the nations by taking down the picture of Isabella and placing in its stead that of Washington. The sons of Italy burn with noble wrath, craving Garibaldi as their chief. Austria's surging millions are advancing. England, the country of Bright and Gladstone, is enfranchising additional thousands. The genius of America is abroad. Her voice is heard in the dungeons of European despotism. In France, in Hungary, in Poland, the voice of earnest imprisoned patriots are urging "how long?" This fiery spirit of revolution cannot be extinguished. In every region of the South men are waking up as from a nightmare. The Moslem of the old Mogul Empire feels the scimiter stir in its scabbard, and he murmurs "God is great." The Irishman lays his hand once upon his trusty pike and hopes for a day of vengeance. Japan opens her gates and Pagan millions hear the gospel. China selects the Republican Burlingame as her messenger by the nations. The spirit of Washington is marching on. Convict ships, scaffolds and pools of blood, cannot quench the indestructible principle of Right. It is older than mitres and thrones.

"There is a sound on every sea,
A voice on every wave,
The watchword of the free,
The anthem of the brave.
From step to step it rings
Through Europe's many climes
A knell to despot kings,
A sentence on their crimes
Where'er a wind is rushing,
Where'er a heart is gushing
The swelling sounds are heard
Of man to free man calling
Of broken fetters falling,
And like the carol of a cageless bird
The bursting shout of
Freedom's rallying word."

The patriotism of the American people during the war and since is a theme of thankfulness. Patriotism or the love of country is a beautiful sentiment. There is a splendor about it which commends it to all men. It is this principle that arms the patriot in the defence of his country and impels eager thousands to share his fate.

It is this noble sentiment that binds man to man; which associates with itself all the sweet charities of home, speaks the same language and recognizes a common interest. It inspires the Laplander to prefer the eternal sorrows of his country life to all the splendor and profusion of Asia, because it is his country. The savage clings to his native land, however barren, and disdains to barter his independence. There is no nobler answer on record than that which was given by a famous Chief of a savage tribe, to some Europeans who would have bribed him to give up his patrimony: "We were born," said he, "upon this spot; our fathers are buried here. Shall we then say to these bones, rise up and let us go hence?" The sentiment of patriotism is universal among nations.

The Scotchman is affected by the sight of a thistle in a foreign land. It reminds him of the land of Wallace and of Bruce. The Shamrock, the chosen leaf of bard and chief, stirs the heart of the exiles of Erin, making them long for the arrival of the day when they shall muster under Emmet's immortal name. The Frenchman is aroused at a glimpse of the *Fleur de lis*, for it awakens pleasant memories of sunny France. This noble virtue is not confined to any particular age, language or nation. The *Abbe de Lisle*, of France, relates of an Indian who, amid the splendors of Paris, beholding a banana tree in the *jardin des plantes*, bathed it with tears, and seemed for a moment to be transported to his own shores.

The Ethiopian imagines that God made his sands and deserts, while angels were employed to make the rest of the world. The Maltese, isolated on rocks, distinguished their lands by the appellation, "the flowers of the world." The Norwegians, proud of their barren summits, inscribed upon rix dollars, "spirit, loyalty, valor, and whatever is honorable, let the world learn among the rocks of Norway."

This fidelity to one's country is acknowledged by the fisherman as he sits by his cottage on the Atlantic or Pacific beach, and by the wild hunter of the Western plains. It is heralded in lands distant from each other and different in political institutions, in the plaudits of a Tell, a Washington, a Wallace, a Brutus, an Emmett and a Lincoln.

It nerves the arm and fires the bosom in every scene and vicissitude of life, and when the patriot's closing eye is turned for the last time to the sun in the heavens, whether amid the shock of steel, or from the victories of peace, his last thought is his country, and his last prayer that its greatness may be coeval with the coming grandeur of God's eternal Son.

The illustrious son of Chatham, brooding over the failure of the coalition against France, when stretched upon the bed of sickness, exhausted by debility, and wrecked with pain, forgot his own sufferings and exclaimed with his expiring breath, "Oh, my country." The philosophic and chivalrous Falkland, when his native land was rent by civil war, moved by this loyalty to country, reiterated in words which forever consecrates his memory, "peace for England," and perished intrepidly in battle, defending that cause which his conscience told him was right.

We should be thankful for abundant harvests. The fields have been covered with golden crops, the gardens have blushed with ripe fruit, the pastures are clothed with flocks, and all nature teems with tokens of our Maker's providential care; the very rivers that run through the valleys, while they beautify the scenery, bear on their bosoms the products of every clime for your enjoyment! the air around you is scented with sweetness and echoes on every side with the cheering melody of song. What a scene is this to refresh and gladden man's heart, and to lift in adoring gratitude to the Giver of all good! We hold it to be hardly possible for an individual to take his stand upon any elevated spot on a fine summer's day, and to survey the panorama of richness and of loveliness which is spread out before him, all over canopied by the soft blue sky, looking the very image of Heaven's protecting tenderness, without feeling touched with some sensations of God's goodness, or sending up some gratitude to the Author of so many bounties. Who can stand upon the summit of some lofty hill and survey in a glow of excitement the wide extended fields, tinted with various hue, bathed in a flood of light, or as he has passed in his rural stroll through fields ripe with corn, and observed the peaceful ears bending before each rustling breeze, or rippling like an ocean of gold at every passing gale. Who, I say, can have witnessed scenes like these without feeling his heart stirring within him with new and uncontrollable emotions? And can we not find a scene similar to this? Will not our own land present it? How richly, how bountifully has America been blessed of God? We had a genial seed time, followed by warm suns and refreshing showers; A few weeks rolled on, and our hills were luxuriant with verdure, and our valleys overflowing with corn. Then came the glorious harvest time, with its golden sheaves and rejoicing husbandmen, and stirring scenes! Gleaners plying their busy task in the field, and barnyards replete with produce! And look at us now. We have our granaries filled to the full with corn. Ships from our shores freighted with food are bearing it to many distant nations.

Consider God's dealings with you as families, and you will have materials for grateful acknowledgments. Among the bright and peaceful creatures of our holy religion; among those things which stamp with a peculiar and impressive beauty, will ever rank the delightful spectacle of a united family, connected for the most part by ties of common blood, and having the same hopes. the same interests, the same common fears and joys. Let us glance at such a home. There are the calm and secret joys of the domestic hearth, that bright and consecrated spot, where husband and wife. parents and children, brothers and sisters mingle their purest affections, their most intimate thoughts, their fondest hopes in unrestrained fellowship. No chalice of earthly bliss is so sparkling, so little adulterated as that which they pass from hand to hand, not only on festive times, but in their daily gathering around their own firesides. These homes are Edens, little enclosures of blessing, favored spots in earth's wide waste. There is something in the word *home* that wakes the kindler feelings of the human heart. No songs are sweet like those we hear among the boughs that shade the ancestral mansion

Our grandest theme of thankfulness is a restored Union. In Dresden there is an iron egg, the history of which is something like this. A young prince sent this iron egg to a lady to whom he was betrothed. She received it, held it in her hand, and looked at it with disdain. In her indignation that he should send her such a gift, she cast it to the earth. When it touched the ground, a spring, cunningly hidden in the egg, opened and a silver yolk rolled out. She touched a secret spring in the yolk and a golden chicken was revealed. She touched a spring in the chicken and a ruby crown was found within. She touched a spring in the crown, and within it was a diamond marriage ring. The great God in his mystery threw down to us an iron egg; it was rusted with tears and clotted with blood. We took it in our hands and looked at it. We lifted our eyes to Heaven and said: "Great Father, what broods of devils may be hatched from this" but as we let it fall, a spring was touched, and a silver yolk rolled out that spread like a broad shield of patriotism all over the land in the days that followed the dismantling of Sumter. When the spring was touched again, there came out, not a single golden chicken, but a glorious brood of them. Ellsworth, Banks, Burnside, Foote, Seigel. Shields, Logan, Meade, McPherson, Sheridan, Grant. Then we found each a spring, and when we touched the spring, we found within each a ruby for a crown.

Shields gave us Winchester, Logan Donelson; McPherson, Vicksburg; Sheridan, Five Fords; Sherman, the Carolinas; Farragut, not a handsome name, but was it not a handsome deed? gave us New Orleans and Mobile; Grant the noblest Roman of them all, gave us the Republic. When all these rubies were gathered we put them in a crown, and in the crown there was a spring! we touched it and within was the diamond ring of Union unbroken still! and with God's help we have placed it on the nation's finger and she shall wear it ever more. Grant's election is a grand augury of the nation's future peace, prosperity and perpetuity. God save the Republic.

> Sail on, O Union, strong and great
> Humanity with all its fears
> With all its hopes of future years
> Is hanging breathless on thy fate.

What a goodly heritage is ours. Its area is grander than that of Rome in its palmiest days. The ocean is studded with the nation's commerce, and our rivers are covered with floating palaces. America has the best,

the freest government on the face of the earth. The weary and oppressed children of Europe are always welcome to her blessed shores. We have two millions of farms and yet this is not one quarter of the national domain. We publish more newspapers and possess more schools than all Europe. Americans invented steamboats and the telegraph, and they are now building the grandest railroad in the world. The republic is not wanting in great and brilliant names. She can show to the world her shining paragons, the founders of the government. The Declaration of Independence, written by Jefferson is the undying monument of our fathers glory. Every sentence of this immortal charter is a crushing thunderbolt against tyrant wrong. The brilliant crown to which our fathers aspired was patriotism. What a grand array of names—Benjamin Franklin, who tamed the lightning and called the thunders sweet music. George Washington, an angel in human form. Then the brighest jewel of the later days the consummate flower of the present century, Abraham Lincoln. As he passed to a better world, the eternal gates opened unto him the grandest of all ovations. In the literary world, we can point to such essayists as Emerson, Whipple, Holmes, Lowell and Curtis; to such historians as Bancroft, Irving, Prescott and Motley; to such soldiers as Sherman, Sheridan, Thomas, Meade and Grant; to such statesmen as Charles Sumner, Henry Wilson, Stanton, Chase and Colfax; to such poets as Whittier, Pierpont, Longfellow; to such sculptors as Powers and Crawford; to such orators as Phillips, Evarts and Simpson. Shall not the review of these wondrous national privileges cause to arise from our united hearts as from a living altar the incense of adoring praise to the footstool of the Divine majesty? Sons and daughters of God, take your harps from the willows and break forth unto singing. Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the firmament of His power; praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him and be exceedingly glad men of the South, for the poisonous snake of slavery has been chased from your blooming paradise forever. Praise the Lord, Oh my soul and all that is within me Bless His holy name.

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